

He recognized frankly that the Poles had overreached themselves in carrying the offensive into Russia, and that the Soviet government had a perfect right to press its victories until the Poles agreed to an armistice on such terms as any other victor would dictate. Only in the event of imposition of terms destroying the independence of Poland would Britain intervene, and then not by armies but by economic pressure. And in the event of a satisfactory Polish settlement Lloyd George contemplated a general peace with the Soviets.

Secretary Colby's plan is in short, neither peace nor war with the Soviets. Let the Poles arrange an armistice, in the most limited sense of the term, and then let us all sit watchfully waiting until the Soviet government collapses. That is a plan which the French, anxious about their bloodstained Russian bonds, approve enthusiastically. But its implications are disturbing. If Poland can not make a binding peace, as well as an armistice, then the Soviet government in self-defense will be compelled to disarm Poland completely, if it can, and set up a government that will be immune from French and American influence. But that would be to violate the Treaty of Versailles, which guaranteed Poland's independence. It would be the beginning of a general war.

Secretary Colby, in effect, challenges the Soviet government to enter upon the general war which the British are endeavoring desperately to avoid. Thus he aligns America against British liberalism and common sense and with French militarism and reaction. American influence, however, will be exerted in the moral field only, since the time has passed when the administration can carry on war against Russia on its own initiative, and Congress would hardly vote for war at the Administration's request. France may make much of the diplomatic support of America, but the will of Britain is likely to prevail. For the British know that whoever plays the fool they will pay the piper.

Mr. Roosevelt's Imaginary League

MR. ROOSEVELT'S speeches are particularly appealing because they are gracious and simple. Governor Cox also is attractive when he is trying to stimulate the hope and courage of America as against its timidity and selfishness. The Democratic candidates are, in a sense, the idealists of the campaign. But they are idealists whose ideals exist entirely in the realm of the imagination. Neither of them is talking about anything which actually exists; neither of them betrays the effects of any knowledge or thought about things as they

are. They argue eloquently that war is barbarous, costly, and unreasonable. They plead nobly that reason is a better arbiter than force. They insist rightly that America cannot be a hermit nation. But they talk about the world as only a hermit could. For while they demand contact with the world, they illustrate in their own speeches a lack of contact and an inexperience which would make a European blush.

Take, for example, the remarks of Mr. Roosevelt at Milwaukee. He talked about Poland and said:

If America had been a member of the League of Nations the Polish nation would not be today fighting Bolshevism with its back to the wall. If America had been able to throw into the scale the splendid moral force of its hundred millions of people, the Bolshevik armies would not be where they are now. . . . It would not have been necessary for America to become entangled in any way in European politics. Ours would have been the quieting and steadying hand in a league which without America is incomplete. History will lay a great share of the responsibility for the plight of the splendid people of Poland upon those little narrow men who today control the machinery of the Republican party. But for their desire to satisfy a personal spite, the Bolsheviks would not be knocking at the gates of Warsaw.

These sentences are worth examining closely for they state concretely the Democratic position on the League. What is the argument? It begins with an assumption of fact, namely, that Poland is the victim of aggression by Russia because Russian armies are approaching Warsaw. The fact is untrue. Poland is no more the victim of aggression than Germany would have been if Foch had broken into Germany. This is a war of Polish aggression, not of Russian aggression. It started with the Polish armies several hundred miles beyond the frontier assigned to them by the Peace Conference. Its opening phase was an invasion of Russia as far as the city of Kiev. It was a war of conquest by Poland to establish an empire over millions of non-Poles. It was a war begun after repeated attempts by Russia to avert it by negotiations of peace. All this is clearly recognized by Mr. Lloyd George:

The Soviet government in any conditions of peace are entitled to take into account the fact of attacks made by the Polish armies upon Russia . . . and they are also entitled to demand such guarantees as would be enacted by any Power against repetition of an attack of that kind.

All of this Mr. Roosevelt flatly ignores, and proceeds to argue with every moral implication that Poland is the innocent victim. Upon this piece of misinformation he then proceeds to build a logical edifice. The League, he says, would have prevented this war had America been a member. Naturally the question arises: why did not the thirty-odd

nations of the League stop the war? Mr. Roosevelt says: Because without America the League "is incomplete." He means that the League is not strong enough to restrain *Russia*. Had *Russia* been the aggressor that would be a sound argument. But since *Poland* was the aggressor what sense is there in it? Would anybody say that a League which includes the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan is not strong enough to restrain a weak, impoverished unstable little country like Poland? Nobody would argue that. Mr. Roosevelt would not argue it, had he taken the trouble to read Mr. Lloyd George's speech.

Well, why did not the League restrain Poland? Lord Robert Cecil tried to find out last May, and the answer of Lord Curzon came down to this: that action by the League "would certainly be regarded as intervention in favor of the Bolsheviks and against our Allies." In other words, a League member—Poland—is not bound by the covenants of the League if holding her to those covenants would displease "Allies." Russia, not being a member of the League, had no rights under the covenants, and Poland had no duties. Therefore the League could not act. None of this enters into Mr. Roosevelt's argument because he simply does not happen to know the fundamental fact in the situation—namely that the Russo-Polish war is an example of the League's failure to prevent aggression by a member of the League.

It might be argued, however, by some one who was better informed, that America would, as a member of the League, have forced Poland to retire within her frontiers and to give up her plans of conquest. That is theoretically possible. But actually, what would have been the case? America would have been represented in the council by some one who took his orders from President Wilson and Mr. Bainbridge Colby. Three outstanding facts attest their attitude in this matter. The first is the sale of munitions to Poland. The second is the absolute trickery and deceit of their pretense that they have lifted the illegal blockade of Russia. The third is the recent note declaring against peace with Russia, for that is what the note boils down to when it suggests an "armistice," without trade or intercourse, to the victorious armies of Russia. The Wilson administration is against peace in eastern Europe on the only terms on which peace is available. What is more, the Wilson administration has shown its bad will by using its "moral influence" at the critical moment to sabotage the efforts of Britain and Italy to restore order. If any one thinks that the presence of Wilson in the League would make for peace, he is welcome to the illusion. But evidence to support him is hard to find.

What is the moral to be drawn from the inno-

cence of Mr. Roosevelt and the behavior of Mr. Wilson? Isn't it this? That in spite of all the talk about abandoning isolation and leading the world, many of our public men embody the very isolation which they deplore. They tell us that we cannot build a Chinese Wall, and they are right. But around the minds of men like Roosevelt and Cox and Wilson there is a Chinese Wall so high that they are quite isolated from the facts of life. Compare what they say and honestly believe with what Mr. Lloyd George says, and you can see the difference between a world-politician and a provincial politician. Our exponents of the League are spinning their policy out of their own inner consciousness stimulated by the winds of propaganda. They were idealistic during the war when idealism was the thing. They are the unconscious allies of every monarchist and reactionary in Europe today, not because they mean to be, but because intellectually they take their cue from the propaganda that is in the air. If Mr. Roosevelt made a speech like the one in Milwaukee to any educated body of men in Europe today the best he could hope for would be an indulgent and charitable smile. Nobody abroad who reads his newspaper is so grossly misinformed.

And so when candidates for office talk glibly about throwing into the scale the splendid moral force of our hundred million people, the question is: who is to do the throwing? Are we to be thrown by men who do not know what they are talking about, or are we to remember that the transition from complete isolation to complete participation is not to be made at one whack? Are we to remember that our first experience in "leadership" was a failure, and that we have a long apprenticeship to serve before we shall have developed diplomats and politicians who know enough to throw around the moral influence of a hundred million people? Dare we forget that if we throw that influence wrongly too often, it will disappear? And are we not in fact compelled to hedge about with the utmost care the authority of those who are to throw us around? Are we not compelled to tie their hands so that they cannot intervene in things they probably do not understand until they have laid the matter before public opinion and had the benefit of a public discussion? Can we afford, in brief, to endow Mr. Harding or Mr. Cox or Mr. Wilson with the power to intervene in Europe, by moral pressure or legal pressure or economic pressure, until we have some assurance that they have at least opened their minds and hearts to the experience of the world? How moral will a moral influence be that has unconsciously been used for immoral purposes too often? How many Versailles, Hungarys, Armenias, Archangels, Kolchaks and Shantung can we afford and not be

Help from Hecklers

IF President Wilson were a student of his own weak points he would have felt what he might call a solemn thankfulness on Tuesday, August 10th. The day afforded a pleasant illustration of one among the familiar differences between parliamentary and congressional government. The British Government defined its intentions toward Poland and Russia. So did the American Government. Mr. Lloyd George made a speech in the House of Commons. Mr. Colby gave to the press an "American note on the Polish situation," in answer to an "agreeable intimation" from the Italian Ambassador that his Government would like to know the American Government's views. Mr. Lloyd George reminded the House that he had promised to take it into the Government's confidence before the Government committed itself to definite action. He cited one instance, implying that it was the only instance, in which this promise had not been kept—the Government had advised Poland "to endeavor to negotiate an armistice and to make peace as long as the independence of ethnographical Poland" was "recognized." There had been no time to lose about sending this advice. Besides, "I felt confident we need not await the sanction of the House as to that." Mr. Colby did not remind anybody of our Government's promise to take anybody into its confidence before committing itself to definite action. Our Government had made no such promise. It was not obliged to consult anybody. It did not wish even to go through the motions of consulting anybody.

With this difference in procedure before his eyes, Mr. Wilson, if he were self-critical, would have revised his old preference for the parliamentary to the congressional form of government. He would have thanked God that our American system is so merciful to a President who likes to play the lonest of all lone hands. It was, to be sure, more of the forms than of the realities of things that Mr. Lloyd George was observant when he took the House into his confidence. Parliament has lost in the last six years whatever effective control of British foreign policy it had before 1914, and it never had much. Mr. Lloyd George's declaration of British policy on August 10th was more effectively controlled by what British Labor had already said to him than by fear of what the House of Commons might say. Still, although the House said nothing, individual members said several things. They interrupted Mr. Lloyd George some fifteen or twenty times. They heckled him. Nobody interrupted President Wilson with questions meant to be disagreeable while he was secludedly inventing this fresh chapter in the foreign

policy of the United States, or while, in answer to that "agreeable intimation" from the Italian Ambassador, he was putting his invention into an American note. Nobody heckled Mr. Colby while he was transmitting the note to the Ambassador or giving it to the papers. Say what you will against congressional government, you can not deny that it does protect the President and the Secretary of State against hecklers.

Certain losses must be reckoned against this gain. Even President Wilson, whose eye so rarely goes searching for joints in his harness, might have examined his Polish note more closely had he expected to read it aloud, subject to questions and other interruptions, on the floor of the Senate. Expecting nothing of the sort, he has given the non-existent and impossible heckler a good many chances. For example: "The Government of the United States, reflecting the spirit of its people, has at all times desired to help the Russian people." At all times? Surely not quite all. Not when it authorized trade with Russia on condition that no merchant or manufacturer in this country should send letters to or receive letters from any Russian manufacturer or merchant. And does not that distinction between a Government and a people, so dear to President Wilson's heart, make the reasoning of the two following passages, taken together, hard to follow? "While deeply regretting the withdrawal of Russia from the war at a critical time, and the disastrous surrender at Brest-Litovsk, the United States has fully understood that the people of Russia were in no wise responsible." Add this sentence, separated from the foregoing by less than the length of two paragraphs, and then grasp, if you can, the President's meaning: "The war weariness of the masses of the Russian people was fully known to this Government and sympathetically comprehended." Doesn't the total foot up to this, that since the Russian people had no chance to vote upon a peace treaty, signed when the war weariness of the Russian masses made peace inevitable, therefore the Russian people were in no wise responsible for the withdrawal of Russia from the war? It would be like President Wilson to believe this, but not even a skilful heckler could force him to recognize the belief as his own, unless it were more gracefully put.

Sometimes the contradictions upon which heckling thrives are not so far as a paragraph apart. Sometimes they embrace each other in a single sentence, such as this: "We are unwilling that while it is helpless in the grip of a non-representative Government, whose only sanction is brutal force, Russia shall be weakened still further by a policy of dismemberment, conceived in other than Russian interests." A heckler might want to know,